

Testimony for SB 24

Chairpersons Bartolomeo and Urban and distinguished members of the Committee on Children:

The Vapor Edge is an electronic cigarette business in Naugatuck and Bristol Connecticut. During our past year in business, we have witnessed the benefits of tobacco harm reduction among many Connecticut residents. Many adults who have been long time tobacco users now have the ability to choose an improved lifestyle through the use of electronic cigarettes, which are smoke-free, tobacco-free, and often nicotine-free. Since our opening we have seen and heard our customers return to tell us about the positive effect that electronic cigarettes have had on their lives.

Unfortunately, as is the case with many things adults do, there are minors in the community who consider the use of electronic cigarettes as a means to gain esteem among their peer group or to emulate the behavior of adults who use electronic cigarettes. We at the Vapor Edge would like to continue to serve our adult community in their efforts of tobacco harm reduction, and support the committee in the measure to ban the purchase or use of electronic cigarettes by minors and encourage SB 24 to pass into law.

In an effort to reflect better accuracy, I would like to suggest that wordings to sections of SB 24 be changed. In section 1, I would suggest the phrase "electronic nicotine delivery system" be changed to "vapor products." The phrase "electronic nicotine delivery system" is not optimal because it will send the message to retailers that electronic cigarettes that do not contain nicotine can legally be sold to minors. Additionally, in the sections of the bill detailing punishments for selling or providing minors with "tobacco products" and "cigarettes," we suggest you include the phrase, "vapor products" to clarify that our products are not "tobacco products" under Connecticut law.

While minor modifications to SB 24 are necessary, we applaud the Governor for putting forth a simple, common sense bill that is truly about preventing youths from accessing electronic cigarettes. We urge the committee to reject any amendments to this bill that would impact consumer choice by legal adults. Taxing electronic cigarette products, defining them as "tobacco products," or banning usage where smoking is banned will be both negative for the health of Connecticut smokers and for this fast growing segment of Connecticut's small business community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

George Bouton